

2008

VIPER DIAMONDBACK

A high-rolling super cruiser





I'D BE HARD PRESSED TO FIND ANYONE IN MY INNER circle who hasn't heard and/or seen the ad campaign "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Heck, we even have an unwritten rule here in the office, "What happens on the road stays on the road." Well, in this story, I've decided to break these cardinal rules and tell you about my most recent trip to Las Vegas —, at least the family-friendly content.

It was the beginning of November, a great time of year to visit Vegas, and, as always, I had several reasons to fly into Sin City. First and foremost, I was there to check out and test-ride Viper Motorcycle Company's latest model on display at SEMA: the 2008 Diamondback. The show was impressive and overwhelming, fueling my itch to get out on the road. So, after a couple of days and help from Viper's local dealer (Las Vegas Trike Center), which was kind enough to take a bike from the show and prep it for me, I finally got my hands on the Diamondback. As I initially let out the clutch and pulled away, I felt the low-end grunt (read torque) from the 152" short-stroke, air-cooled, 45-degree V-twin engine, and I knew that this special bike was going to be a fun test ride.

The all-billet engine is actually Viper's own design. That's right, it's not a crate motor. Loosely based on the Evo design, this engine has been redesigned and, let's say, improved or beefed up with the help of Al Melling (look him up if you haven't heard of him). While on the open road, I soon found out that no matter what gear the bike was in, I could let the rpm fall below 1500 and just roll on the throttle to accelerate

PHOTOS BY JOANNE BORTLES



again, experiencing no lugging. After a quick rip on the highway, I found that in the overdrive sixth gear I was cruising at 75-80 mph, and the power plant was barely spinning at 2500 rpm. All I can say is that this engine is impressive, especially since it's a production motor and not a custom-built one-off. Simply put, Viper's engineers have done a wonderful job with this proprietary engine, and this is the only production bike I know that comes with such a big heart.

The two things I want when I have all this power at my disposal are first that all of the power has to be transferred to the road and second that, when delivered, it must be usable. To address part one, a right-side, six-speed, overdrive transmission and hydraulic clutch setup from Rivera does a splendid job of transferring what the engine offers. So much so that I never once missed a shift or slipped the clutch, even with the grip well twisted. As for part two, using what the powertrain has to offer, starts with wheels, a 21" up front and 18" out back. The best part of this combination is that the wheels are so well-matched that the bike tracked

absolutely perfectly. Traction comes from Metzeler rubber (120/70 front and 260/40 Rear). Many times I'd forget I was on a cruiser that had 260 out back. Factor in the Diamondback's adjustable Marzocchi inverted front end and a proprietary, seven-piece, chromed-billet swingarm with oil-dampened, adjust-on-the-fly, air-ride rear suspension and this bike is good to go. The suspension package works great and does a first-rate job of keeping the bike planted while accelerating forward. It's so stable that single HHI four-piston differential bore calipers on the front and rear easily slow things down when needed. The more



new designs that include a patented, integrated, isometric-dampening, rubber-mounting system specifically for their monster power plant, and came up with a proprietary frame that also doubles as the oil tank. Heck, these guys even created their own wiring harness so they could incorporate anything they needed or wanted.

Overall, the Diamondback looks sharp, and its fit and finish are top notch. The composite fenders and battery cover are matched to the powdercoated frame. All available paint schemes are subtle, and the one on my test ride seemed to

make the bike look fast in a non-offensive way. To me, this bike is clearly designed with performance in mind, so don't even consider buying it unless that's what you're looking for. It's meant to be ridden hard, using all of its capabilities to challenge your riding skills. This super cruiser has a ton of useable power and is an unbelievably smooth ride, especially since it's in a softtail-style setup. Leaving Las Vegas, I considered putting in an order for my own Viper Diamondback, especially since prices start around

\$36,000. The bike I tested isn't even \$40 grand, and it includes the exhaust, wheel, and simple paint options you see here. That's hitting it big anywhere, if you ask me.

So, in closing, without telling you what else went on while

I was in Vegas, let's just say I could have shelled out a deposit on a bike similar to this one for my personal stable back home, but didn't. At least before leaving town I used that deposit well. Hey, maybe in the future I'll ask Viper to do a long-haul review so I can act like I actually own a super cruiser. If Viper does, I'll be sure to let you all know about it. **AIM**

SOURCES

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